

WE CLAIM:

1. A car top carrier comprising:

a box having a lid and a bottom,

a clamp device configured to attach the bottom of the box to a pair of crossbars on

5 top of a car,

one or more hinge devices releaseably connecting the lid to the bottom, each hinge

having a first portion secured to the lid, and a second portion secured to the bottom, the

hinge being configured to permit pivotal rotation of the lid along an edge portion of the

bottom, and being provided with a release mechanism so that the hinge device can also

10 function as a latch allowing separation of the first and second portions of the hinge

device, wherein the hinge device automatically snaps into engagement when the first

portion is urged toward the second portion.

2. The carrier of claim 1, wherein one of the first and second portions has a

15 catch, and the other portion has an enlarged structure configured for receipt by the catch.

3. The carrier of claim 2, wherein the catch is spring biased toward a closed

position which permits entry of the enlarged structure into the catch but does not allow

exit of the enlarged structure from the catch without manipulation.

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4. The carrier of claim 2, wherein the catch includes a pawl that is spring

biased toward a constricted-passage position.

5. The carrier of claim 4, wherein the pawl can be pushed aside by the enlarged structure upon entry but not upon exit of the catch.

6. A car top carrier comprising:

5 a box having a lid and a bottom,

a clamp device configured to attach the bottom of the box to a pair of crossbars on top of a car,

one or more hinge devices releasably connecting the lid to the bottom, each hinge having a first portion secured to the lid, and a second portion secured to the bottom, the  
10 hinge being configured to permit pivotal rotation of the lid along an edge portion of the bottom, and being provided with a release mechanism so that the hinge device can also function as a latch allowing separation of the first and second portions of the hinge device, wherein one of the first and second portions has a catch, and the other portion has an enlarged structure configured for receipt by the catch.

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7. The carrier of claim 6, wherein the catch is spring biased toward a closed position which permits entry of the enlarged structure into the catch but does not allow exit of the enlarged structure from the catch without manipulation.

20 8. The carrier of claim 6, wherein the enlarged structure is substantially spherical so that the hinge device permits the first and second portions to be mounted on various lid and bottom shapes.

9. The carrier of claim 6, wherein the catch is provided with a spring that urges the enlarged structure to disengage when catch is manipulated to an open position.

10. The carrier of claim 6 further comprising

5 first and second lid supports, each lid support connecting the lid to the bottom.

11. The carrier of claim 10, wherein each lid includes a slider mounted on a spring, and a cam slidably contacting the slider so that the lid support assists in opening and closing the lid.

10 12. The carrier of claim 6, wherein the first portion has the enlarged structure and the second portion has the catch.

13. The carrier of claim 6, wherein the first portion has the catch and the  
15 second portion has the enlarged position.

14. The carrier of claim 6, wherein the second portion has a receptacle with a flared lip allowing a limited amount of hinge rotation.

20 15. The carrier of claim 6, wherein the catch includes a pawl that is spring biased toward a constricted-passage position.

16. The carrier of claim 15, wherein the pawl can be pushed aside by the enlarged structure upon entry but not upon exit of the catch.

17. A car top carrier comprising:

5 a box having a lid and a bottom,

a clamp device configured to attach the bottom of the box to a pair of crossbars on top of a car,

one or more hinge devices releasably connecting the lid to the bottom, each hinge having a first portion secured to the lid, and a second portion secured to the bottom, the  
10 hinge being configured to permit pivotal rotation of the lid along an edge portion of the bottom, and being provided with a release mechanism so that the hinge device can also function as a latch allowing separation of the first and second portions of the hinge device, the first and second portions being configured to permit relative rotation around at least two axes.

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18. The carrier of claim 17, wherein the clamp device includes at least one cam lever positioned inside the box for opening and closing the clamp device securely around a crossbar.

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